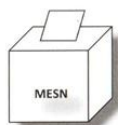


MALAWI ELECTORAL SUPPORT NETWORK (MESN)



Democracy, Elections, Governance

P.O. Box 51154, Limbe

Tel : 0111 628 602

Cell : 0888 325 582

: 0995 689 033

Email: mesnsecretariate@gmail.com

Website : www.mesnmw.org

MESN Preliminary Statement on the Conduct of the 2014 Tripartite Elections

Delivered at Mount Soche Hotel, Blantyre – 21 May 2014

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Mount Soche Hotel in Blantyre. While voting is still underway at 45 polling stations, the process has concluded for the vast majority of the country.

Given concerns following the late opening of polling stations yesterday, the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) believes that it is critical to share systematic nationwide information on the conduct of the polls. These elections belong to the Malawian people, but most voters will have seen the process at only one polling station. To make an informed decision about whether these elections meet the expectations of the Malawian people they need systematic nationwide information on the conduct of the process – both the challenges as well as what went well.

This is not MESN's final statement on the 2014 Tripartite Elections. We continue to observe the process through its conclusion. Following the announcement of official results by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), MESN will issue a statement on the accuracy of the official results for the presidential election. MESN will, as appropriate, issue additional statements as well as a final report on the entire 2014 Tripartite Election process.

Summary

Despite the serious delays in the opening of polling stations due to the late delivery of materials, reports from MESN observers indicate that once polling stations finally opened that setup, voting and counting, while not perfect, generally proceeded according to the MEC's procedures as well as regional and international standards for elections. While there were voters who were forced to wait many hours for their polling stations to open, ultimately voters had a reasonable opportunity to exercise their right to vote and these delays did not fundamentally compromise the integrity of the process.

However, it is equally clear from reports from MESN's observers that the 2014 Tripartite Elections were not a step forward for the country. Once again there were serious challenges with the voter's register with the voter registration process lacking sufficient transparency. While the logistical challenges on Election Day ultimately did not undermine the credibility of the process, neither did it build confidence. Elections are no longer new. By now voters, candidates and parties should all be able to expect that the MEC can successfully manage logistical issues.

About MESN

Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) is a registered network of civil society organizations working on democratic governance and elections in Malawi. It is a registered member of Council for Non- Governmental Organizations (CONGOMA) in Malawi. It was formed in 2003 and has

successfully participated in 2004 and 2009 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Malawi and currently has 27 members. It has also participated in election observer missions in the SADC regions and beyond. MESN is currently chair for SADC Electoral Support Network (SADC ESN) and founding member of the Global Network for Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). It comprises of non-governmental, faith-based and community – based organizations. The network works closely with Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), other networks, development partners, political parties and eligible voters in ensuring that elections held in Malawi meet both local and international standards for acceptable democratic elections as a way of sustaining democratic governance in Malawi.

Methodology

MESN observes elections based on the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations. In assessing the conduct of elections, MESN looks at compliance by all stakeholders with our Constitution, Electoral Act and related laws as well as regulations and procedures set out by the MEC. MESN also draws upon Malawi regional and international commitments contained in the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and related protocols.

The data for this report is based primarily on observations from MESN's 800 Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) Observers who were deployed to a representative random sample of polling stations across all three regions, all 28 districts and all 193 parliamentary constituencies. While MESN deployed nearly 7,000 total observers to encourage participation, deter problems and enhance transparency, the role of MESN's 800 PVT Observers was to provide rapid information on the conduct of the election that is truly representative of the entire country. It is also information from these observers that will be used to verify the accuracy of the official results as announced by the MEC.

Setup and Opening of Polling Stations (793 of 800 reporting)

As reported by MESN yesterday, there were serious challenges in the distribution of polling materials that significantly delayed the opening of many polling stations. By 6:30am only 66% of polling stations were open across the country with just 51% open in Southern region. This problem was worst in Blantyre district where only 8 of 33 sampled polling stations were open by 6:30am. By 8am the situation had improved with 87% of polling stations open nationally. But challenges remained in Southern regional where 18% of polling stations had still not opened. However, by 12noon MESN Observers reported that 95% of all polling stations had opened with only isolated polling stations yet to open.

Table 1: Cumulative Polling Station Opening Times by Region (771 of 800 reporting)				
Region	Total Open by 6:00am	Total Open by 6:30am	Total Open by 8:00am	Total Open by 1:00pm
Central	36%	72%	90%	97%
Northern	38%	82%	91%	94%
Southern	25%	51%	82%	97%
Total	32%	66%	87%	96%

Source: Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN)

Once materials were received the setup and opening of polling stations generally proceeded smoothly according to reports from MESN Observers.

- **97%** of polling stations were set up so that voters could mark their ballots in secret.
- **95%** of polling stations were located in a place easily accessible to persons with disabilities.
- At **99%** of polling streams the presidential ballot box was shown to be empty before being closed.
- **96%** of polling stations had a voter's register.
- **99%** of polling stations had presidential ballot papers.
- **97%** of polling stations had the correct parliamentary ballot papers.
- **95%** of polling stations had the correct ward councillor ballot papers.

Voting at Polling Stations (777 of 800 reporting)

While the start of voting was seriously delayed at 13% of polling stations and did not take place at less than 1% of polling stations, MESN Observers report that once voting commenced the process, while not perfect, proceeded in a generally uniform manner consistent with the MEC's procedures.

- At **94%** of polling stations persons with disabilities, the elderly and nursing mothers were allowed to come to the front of the queue.
- At **6%** of polling stations 10 or more people's names could not be found in the voter register, and they were not permitted to vote.
- At **17%** of polling stations 10 or more people were allowed to vote even though their names could not be found on the voter's register. This issue was somewhat more prevalent in Northern region (25%) and Southern region (22%).
- At **5%** of polling stations 10 or more people were allowed to vote even though they did not have a voter registration certificate.
- At **5%** of polling stations 10 or more people were allowed to vote even though their finger was already marked with indelible ink.
- At **95%** of polling stations all voters' fingers were marked with indelible ink.
- At **14%** of polling stations there were more than 50 assisted voters with a relatively similar pattern across the country – Central region 13%, Northern region 17% and Southern 15%.
- At those locations with assisted voters, **14%** of polling stations voters requesting assistance voting were not allowed to select a person of their choosing. This issue was somewhat more prevalent in Southern region (19%).
- At **97%** of polling stations every voter was issued with three ballot papers (councillor, parliamentary and presidential) (725 of 751).

- At **96%** of polling stations no one attempted to disrupt the voting process.
- At **96%** of polling stations no one attempted to intimidate voters.
- At **96%** of polling stations no one attempted to influence the polling officials.

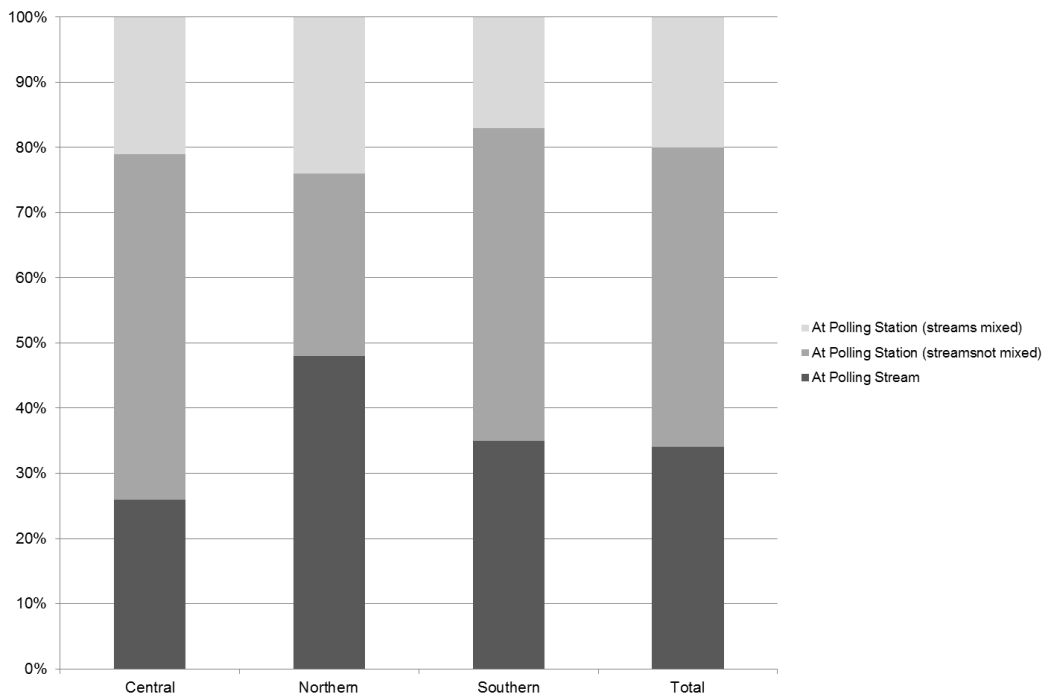
Counting of Ballots (754 of 800 reporting)

According to reports from MESN's Observers counting was generally conducted according to MEC procedures, with the exception that at only minority of polling stations were presidential ballot papers counted at the polling stream.

The instructions to the presiding officer were for ballot papers to be counted at the polling stream.

- At **33%** of polling stations presidential ballot papers were counted at polling streams.
- At **46%** of polling stations ballot boxes from all of the polling streams were brought to a central location and the presidential ballot papers counted separately for each polling stream.
- At **20%** of polling stations the ballot boxes for all of the polling streams were brought to a central location and the presidential ballot papers for all streams were counted together.

**Chart 1: Location and Method of Counting Presidential Ballots by Region
(753 of 800 Reporting)**



Source: Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN)

- At **99%** of polling stations polling officials counted the ballot papers so that all polling agents and observers present could see how each ballot paper was marked.
- At **95%** of polling stations the presidential ballot papers were correctly sorted into different piles by candidate.

- At **95%** of polling stations no one attempted to disrupt the counting of presidential ballot papers.
- At **95%** of polling stations no one attempted to influence the polling officials during the counting of the presidential ballot papers.
- Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) had party agents at **94%** of polling stations and at **99%** of polling stations where there were DPP party agents they signed the official results form for the presidential election.
- Malawi Congress Party (MCP) had party agents at **87%** of polling stations and at **99%** of polling stations where there were MCP party agents they signed the official results form for the presidential election.
- People's Party (PP) had party agents at **97%** of polling stations and at **99%** of polling stations where there were PP party agents they signed the official results form for the presidential election.
- United Democratic Front (UDF) had party agents at **86%** of polling stations and at **99%** of polling stations where there were UDF party agents they signed the official results form for the presidential election.

Table 2: Political Party Polling Agents at Polling Stations (741 of 800 reporting)		
Party	Polling Agent Present at Polling Station	Polling Agent Signed Presidential Results Form
DPP	94%	99%
MCP	87%	99%
PP	97%	99%
UDF	86%	99%

Source: Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN)

Conclusion

MESN is continuing to observe the process – including at polling stations where voting is taking place today. Immediately after the MEC announces the official results for the presidential election MESN will issue its statement on the accuracy of the official results based on the PVT. MESN will issue additional statements as warranted.

MESN calls upon all Malawians to remain calm and to show political maturity during the counting of ballots and announcement of official results by the MEC.

For more information contact Steve Duwa on 0888644813.

Learn more about MESN at www.mesnmw.org or www.facebook.com/Malawi.Electoral.Support.Network

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